

CRANSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE PUBLIC WORK SESSION

DECEMBER 5, 2012

WILLIAM A. BRIGGS BUILDING (REED CONFERENCE ROOM)

845 PARK AVENUE

EXECUTIVE SESSION 6:00 P.M.

**PUBLIC WORK SESSION IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING EXECUTIVE
SESSION**

**PUBLIC MEETING IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING PUBLIC WORK
SESSION**

MINUTES

The School Committee Public Work Session was called to order at 6:00 p.m. on the above date with the following members present: Ms. Iannazzi, Mr. Lombardi, Mrs. Ruggieri and Mrs. Culhane. Mr. Traficante, Mrs. McFarland and Mr. Bloom were absent with cause.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. and convene to Executive Session pursuant to RI State Laws –

PL 42-46-5(a)(1) Personnel

PL 42-46-5(a)(2) Collective Bargaining and Litigation:

a. (Contract Negotiations' Update – Secretaries)

Call to Order – Public Session was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

The roll was called; a quorum was present. No votes were taken during executive Session.

Adjourn to Public Work Session

Public Work Session

a. Flyers:

Dr. Lundsten: Jeannine Nota-Masse is going to be bringing to your attention the issues and the concern regarding flyers and Mr. Cascione is going to give us the legal piece.

Attorney Cascions: It was brought to my attention that several flyers have been requested to go home with the children. I don't think that we've ever addressed this before but in doing research, RI General Law 16-38-6 states, among other things, that no commercial goods or services shall be sold to students in public schools, etc. nor shall any flyers, literature, advertisements, commercial materials or solicitation will be sent home with students from the public schools except those that are authorized pursuant to policies and procedures adopted by the local School Committee. We have no such policy. Technically at this point in time, any flyers being sent home are kind of in violation of this law. I am bringing this to your attention and obviously we have to work on a policy sooner than later but at this point, you'll be in violation of the law for just sending the flyers home. That policy, when you discuss it, can be as narrow or as broad as you want.

There are districts that say unless it's school related they are not sending it home. This is going to be discussed on Monday night in case there is any potential litigation, etc.

Mrs. Ruggieri: But if they're being approved because we do have a system where they get approved by the Superintendent and then they go out.

Mrs. Culhane: That would mean that we have to stop doing that immediately?

Mr. Lombardi: Paragraph "C" of the Statute says, "Any approved fund raising activity shall be conducted on a voluntary basis." Since this looks at commercial ventures or commercial gain, what is the proposed prohibited activity? What's the particular flyer that raises the eye?

Mr. Cascione: There is no particular flyer that I'm discussing; I'm just saying that in general, right now because you have no policy in place, no flyers should be sent home. There's three parts to that statute; 1 is sale of goods in schools, the other thing is fundraising and the other one is the flyers and it says that you have to pass a policy that at minimum addresses the use of school children to deliver commercial materials to parents. It also says at the end that the Commissioner and/or RIDE will assist; so they probably already have a policy there that can be a guide.

Mr. Lombardi: You believe that if a local Cranston agency such as CLCF or Little League; you think that violates this policy? **Mr. Cascione:** No, you don't have a policy that's what I'm saying. You can have a policy that could allow any Cranston Non-Profit; you could have anybody you want; then you have to be careful of the First Amendment, commercial activity kind of thing where if you're going to let one in you have to let them all in. That's something you can discuss in developing the policy. I'm simply pointing out that this statute says you're not supposed be sending home except as authorized by policies and procedures adopted by the School Committee which hasn't taken place to date.

A discussion ensued regarding this issue.

It was decided that Mrs. Ruggieri and Mrs. Nota-Masse will be working together on this policy.

Public Access to Students

Dr. Lundsten: Sometimes we get a request to send a flyer out; we also get a request that a group go into the school to talk to students during lunch time or during the actual school day. Using my discretion, I denied that to a group earlier this fall and they came back and said where's the policy that says we can't do this. If you leave it to my discretion, I'm going to be perfectly blunt with you; I'm going to deny it; We shouldn't be having a group of children being held in one area; I have no problem with groups coming in after school setting

tables up at PTG meetings, after school, other kinds of activities but when we say that every child has to go and attend one of these, I don't think that's appropriate. Dr. Lundsten stated that she is willing to write a policy to that fact if the committee wants her to.

Mrs. Ruggieri: When this issue came up I thought that we definitely need a policy so I started looking at writing one to see what other districts had. Looking at these two, I think they tie in perfectly together. Quite frankly, it's a disruption to the school day and that's all that I need to know.

Mr. Lombardi added that the younger the students, the more conservative you have to be with access to the building.

Permits

Mrs. Nota-Masse: Again coming in new to this I have some questions about our process. We currently have 424 permits. (A handout was distributed on this subject) This is 424 students who are not attending their home school. The information given to you has the schools listed with the total number of permits allowed at that particular school. What is happening with our population explosion, people are moving in later and later in the school year. As people are moving into the schools what may be their home school, there may not be room for them due to permits so we're clustering kids. If someone moves into the District new they might be a Woodridge kid in the 5th grade (using as an example) and that child would then have

to go to a different school because the seats are taken and they could be taken by a student who's in that district. It has become very difficult for many different reasons but again, we want kids in their home schools for a reason. It's a community issue. We do not provide transportation to students on a permit. We just have a smattering of students all over the district and it's just becoming difficult to manage. We need something (guidelines or policy) because what I might think is a good reason, maybe the previous Assistant Superintendent did or didn't and again there's nothing for me to say that this is why this was denied.

Dr. Lundsten: What's happened, I think, is that one Assistant Superintendent has informed the next of the procedure and the guidelines are rather loose in what is acceptable and not acceptable. Many times when the letter comes through it comes through because of the childcare issue.

Mr. Lombardi: Other than a childcare issue after school, the only two real reasons that I can think of for a permit are siblings and Special Ed.

Dr. Lundsten: Sometimes a child is placed in a building because that's where the programs are offered if they have special needs. That's not a permit; however, if they have siblings and the parent would like to keep them in the same building because it is easier to have all the kids in the same building all at once, they will request a

permit for the other children. I as the Assistant Superintendent, if we could make that happen and there was enough room, I would agree with that especially with a parent providing the transportation. The other thing you need to keep in mind, and I don't know how we tease this out, is sometimes by people asking for a permit it gives us space in another building; leaves a seat open for somebody who does move in where we might have to cluster them out. We're trying to figure out how we can tease that out; how many in here would fall under that category.

Mr. Lombardi: My follow-up question is then, let's put aside those students with special needs and their siblings and let's put aside siblings for whatever reason who used to be there and they are still there and their younger siblings are going there; what seems to suggest to me is there's a problem at Woodridge, Rhodes, Waterman, Hope Highlands, etc. but then there's three at Gladstone. A discussion ensued.

Mrs. Culhane: I know that one of the parents frustration, particularly in Waterman, when we had that issue a few years back where those students got clustered to Garden City; they were frustrated because they know of students that are permitted there at Waterman and what they say is that their child belongs there and because a child is permitted now there's not a spot and that's a frustration that happens at a lot of the schools and I know that it is a legitimate frustration. I know that unfortunately it is difficult to mitigate that but there seems

to be a way so that a child who rightfully belongs at that school, doesn't end up getting clustered out so a child can have a permit. Regardless of what the reason for the permit is

Dr. Lundsten: This is the difficulty; you grant a permit say in the third grade; gets it again in the fourth grade and everything is fine; he's a good kid; good attendance; principal says it's ok because we do check with the principals; then we get to sixth grade and now we get a lot of movers. Do we move that youngster back to their home school after they've been in a building; we granted it for 2-3 years running. You run into that issue too.

Mrs. Ruggieri: I would be interested in too is that they had gotten a while back the population of students and every school that had overages, etc., and I'd be interested to see how this correlates back to that.

Ms. Iannazzi: It sounds like in order for there to be guidelines or a policy be put into place, there might need to be some more specific information provided us to what types of.....how many children are on each type of permit. I don't know if this is more appropriately handled at a sub-committee level. Mrs. Culhane: I would be happy to because I have these direct issues at my schools so I know that there's concerns. Mrs. Nota-Masse noted that perhaps she could come up with something that would tie into re-districting, i.e. where they are; why they are; how many they are, etc. Mr. Lombardi asked

about the free and reduced information that they received regarding some of the Western schools; does the fact that we have permits at a school, does that increase our free and reduced issue at all. Dr. Lundsten answered, “no” because those kids that you’re talking about are not considered permit; they’re clusters. We can take a look at that being where they are coming from we may know....we’d have to ask Jim for the names to find out, which we could do. The only thing that Dr. Lundsten would ask is that we could please have something wrapped up on this by mid-March because the requests do start coming in January, even though we do hold them.

High School Lacrosse

Dr. Lundsten: In front of you there is some information on Lacrosse in Cranston. There is a need statement and I’m going to ask, because we’ve been approached, to add Lacrosse to both Cranston East and Cranston West High Schools. Mrs. Ruggieri spoke on this issue.

Mrs. Ruggieri: My son has been playing Lacrosse for a number of years and he loves the sport and we noticed the sport as it was going on has really been growing. There are younger teams coming up; there is a large number of kids playing and because it’s not offered at the High School level when it stops at 8th grade, there’s really no where for these kids to play unless they start going to private schools. We don’t want to lose any more students to the private schools if we don’t have to. This sport, right now, has come up as one of the top recruiting sports because of its popularity. We had

talked a little bit about what we could do and another parent on one of the teams had approached me and asked what we could do to get this into the high schools. We started throwing ideas around and we now have a new Athletic Director who seemed to be interested in learning more about it and was willing to step up and work with us to see if we could possibly do something about getting the sport into the schools. We were looking at doing this through

Dr. Lundsten: What we need is advisement as to whether to move forward or not.

Mr. Votto: If I may, I was involved last year with Sean and Mike Traficante (AD) before we knew about West. We had decided that golf did not have enough participation at Cranston High East. We wanted to take those funds that we have for that particular sport and abolish the sport (East checked on it last year) and we find that we want to take that sport, boys' lacrosse at East in place of golf which the financial implications are not as serious because we have offsets. From that we discovered that Mrs. Ruggieri wanted to have the same issue at West.

Mrs. Ruggieri: We wanted to do it at both schools. There is an interest at both schools. Knowing the financial situation that we're in, Mrs. Osberg and I have taken on the approach of looking for sustainable funding. We're going to start with corporate funding looking to have corporate donations to come in and have this sport

so that we can have it at the high schools for a five year commitment. We're looking at a 5-year commitment from anyone who is interested in donating to the sport. We have a dead line that we need to have the full funding for at least year 1 done by before we can approach adding the sport. That's where we are at; we actually have a guarantee of \$1,000 and we haven't even started fundraising yet. One down and \$19,000 to go. We're confident that we can move forward in doing this and knowing that we can't move forward unless we have full funding.

Mr. Lombardi: Let me just say that as an Interscholastic League Official and president of the Soccer Officials Association I can remember about 25 years ago being at a table much like this and they were discussing the infancy of Soccer in high school and there was a proliferation of soccer into the high schools because a lot of the schools didn't want to get involved in Soccer. Lacrosse is now the new soccer. I see the popularity of Lacrosse is proliferating across the country. Soccer is now a major sport and I see Lacrosse being like that in 10 years. I see kids crossing over and playing both sports; I see referees crossing over and refereeing both sports. Lacrosse is going to be a major sport at the high school level and we're at the infancy stage now and I think, assuming we can get the funding for it, we should move full throttle.

Mr. Lombardi noted that the only issue with the Rhode Island Interscholastic League that we will ever have is scheduling.

Mr. Kelly, Principal of Cranston High School East: We're at a time crunch right now in terms of.....we have to petition the league to join as a full member. It has to be heard by the Principals in Athletics and be accepted and then a schedule has to be developed from there.

Mr. Varrecchione, Athletic Director, at this time explained the Program to the committee members noting that the interest in Cranston is tremendous. The Cranston Youth Leagues are already very strong. They did need to check whether or not it was feasible; whether or not Parks and Recreation had the facilities to schedule it in the spring. My conversations with Mr. Liberatore had no issues whatsoever. There are places for us to practice; the games could all be played at the Stadium in conjunction with the girls' games which are played there now. Like Mr. Kelly said, there is somewhat of a scheduling issue; I spoke with the League Director this week and he's in the process of making a schedule for this spring. There is not an issue with putting us into the League. He's already given me the scenario where he can either put both schools in Division 3; put one school in Division 2 if need be and then drop a team that is currently in Division 2 down to Division 3. The numbers work. It's balanced and it's not an issue and he's more than willing to accommodate us. However, he does need to know as soon as possible. Lacrosse is not an inexpensive sport; we all know that; however there are ways to raise the money; there are very interested parents.

Ms. Iannazzi: In your projective costs, why is there a volunteer for the Assistant Coach at East but a paid coach at West?

Mr. Varrecchione: We don't anticipate having as high a number initially at Cranston East and as far as raising funds it may be a little bit more difficult for those kids to purchase their equipment, etc. so we were assuming we would start with a volunteer in that position. If there was a need for a second coach, we'd absolutely consider it. Most of the kids in the youth leagues are from the Western side of the City; I think there's a little bit more interest there and the numbers would be higher there.

Ray Votto: We didn't have an Assistant Coach for golf and so when they were doing the calculations we put that into account that we didn't have the money already budgeted.

Ms. Iannazzi: Because there was a Golf Team at East that's now being dispended and turned into this Lacrosse Team, Title 9's not an issue but will Title 9 be an issue at West where you're creating a boys' sport. (Meaning the number of sports offered)

Mr. Varrecchione answered that there is a misconception about Title 9 that there has to be the same number of sports. It does not have to be the same number of sports; they have to be equal opportunities. Mr. Varrecchione went on to explain this to the committee, noting that just adding a boys sport does not violate Title 9.

A discussion ensued regarding this issue regarding the following:

- **\$950.00 to put boys' lines on the field**
- **City workers and what they get paid**
- **This particular sport has not been added to the budget because it starts this spring.**
- **The cost of the total; looking to get corporate sponsorships**
- **Second and third tier of fundraising**
- **Not looking to add this into our budget as expense**
- **There are several concerns about raising the funds**
- **Other cuts that we have made from the budget**
- **Why we are buying goals and using the high end figures**
- **This sport is the sport of the future and is now on ESPN**
- **Concern about raising money-East has to have it because it's a trade off of golf for East**
- **The fundraising event has to go into one pot for both schools**
- **Looking at the interest of the students and the parents to help**

Mr. Votto: The question that we have to ask is that some of these costs are start up costs so the following year they won't be as high. If we're not successful in raising enough money, what happens to East? East would have the funding to have this sport if we don't raise enough funds on.....Mrs. Ruggieri: They will not have the full amount.

Mr. Votto noted that we have money that is not part of the School Department budget that I think that Stephanie was concerned about. There is the potential that we would have enough funds to have it at East.

Ms. Iannazzi: What I was going to suggest earlier is, is it possible to grant preliminary approval to go through with this and then maybe revisit it in January or early February after we.....

Mr. Lombardi: The problem with that is Mr. Mezzenotti. He is going to want to know if you're going to have two teams or not. He's going to want to know, at the earliest possible time, and if you don't have the two teams he's going to give you a hard time about it. I've known him for many years.....

Again, the scheduling issue and the fundraising issue was discussed at length.

Still have to get the School Committee's approval; we need to have the principals write a letter and get RI Principals' Committee on Athletics approval and they strongly suggest that we have a drop-dead date deadline for the funding. Also discussed was the issue of equipment; who supplies it; how expensive it is; where will this money come from and what equipment would we supply, especially for the safety of our students.

Mrs. Culhane raised two issues: One: there strongly has to be equality in the District.

Two: If we're not providing safety equipment, then once again we have a parity issue because the students on the West side have the ability to buy that equipment on their own and the students on the East side don't and you'll see the numbers on the East side go down. In fairness and deference to everybody we need to see a budget where we provide the same kind of safety equipment we would for any other contact sport.

It was noted that we have to start this process early enough to say that there is an inclination to support the program; however, it's going to be private fund raising to do it. That's the problem. The Interscholastic League is most likely worried about two things; filing fee and their scheduling. It was noted that it will be vetted by the Principals' Committee.

RFP for Communications Consultant

Ms. Iannazzi: I actually asked that this be put on the Agenda. I think that one of the areas in which we have been faulted over the past several months is in our ability to communicate with the Cranston Community and with the Parent Community out there. My idea is to issue an RFP for a Communications Specialist/Consultant that would work for the School Committee as a whole and would assist in communicating messages to the public at large. It would be a social

media campaign. Providence and Warwick have people on their staff that does this full time. Our staff, as is, is already overworked and this isn't a burden that I want to place on anyone else. I'm looking for some feedback from the School Committee to see if they think this is a good idea; do they want to proceed; or if they have any other suggestions.

Mrs. Ruggieri: Right now we have some schools that have their own pages and things like that.

Ms. Iannazzi: This would be more of a School Committee Communications' person. She would be a press release communication person who communicates with the media who gets the story covered so there are no questions. In regards to the payroll; that's why we would put out an RFP. An approximate pay would be \$1000 - \$1,500 a month. It was noted that Providence has an individual that gets paid in excess of \$100,000 per year and her soul job is that she handles communications for the School Department.

Dr. Lundsten: If you get on websites of larger cities of most school systems, they have somebody who handles this and some of them actually have offices. When I was looking for Strategic Plans that was one of the things that they communicated.

Ms. Iannazzi: Even as an example, the Providence City Council hired

a firm and paying them a stipend similar and they handle all communication aspects on behalf of the Providence Council.

Mrs. Culhane: This is one of those issues where everybody talks about consolidation and redistricting and making their 36 School Departments smaller. This would be a great opportunity for the State to get together; even counties. You have a firm. We need to do it but it is something that would be great for School Departments or School Committees to get together with and hire a firm together. It is something to think about for the future. So we're not individually hiring our own PR firms.

Mr. Lombardi stated that there is no area particularly sensitive and more particularly selfish than the area of Education because parents want the best for their children. Sometimes parents are blinded by what they believe to be what is best for their children and sometimes people like parents or people advocating on behalf of parents think that they are educators and there is a fine line and a really distinct line between a parent whether educated or not educated and an educator.

Ms. Iannazzi: I think that the district as a whole, there's so many positive things that nobody knows about and it's because that's not where the focus is. All of our administrators are spending so much time on other things that they don't have the time, necessarily, to publicize the good things that we do and this individual or firm would

have that time to publicize the good things that we do. She noted that if there is anyone interested in serving on the interview committee, please let us know.

RIDE Enrollment Census – James Dillon

(See Documents that Mr. Dillon passed out)

Mr. Dillon: When Superintendent Lundsten started doing her ...going out to the public and talking about Strategic Planning for the district, going forward, and also internally we've been talking about Strategic Planning, we decided to take a look at some of the things that have been changing about the Cranston Public Schools over the last 10 or so years. I took a real brief snapshot of the last from 2005 to the present. These are the October 1 reports that we send to the State of Rhode Island and it's actually...there's more detail to it. (See hand out) These are the most important changes or trends that we've been seeing for a while and that we think we're going to continue to see going forward. The data is on one sheet and the narrative or the explanation is on the other sheets. At this time Mr. Dillon went over these sheets with the School Committee. In answering a question by Mr. Lombardi, Mr. Dillon noted that a non-resident student is a student who attends school in Cranston but is a resident of a district other than Cranston. He gave them the example of students at the CAC&TC that come from Johnston. Students at the Charter School who come from a different district; years ago we had just the CAC&TC that students came in. We very rarely take in tuition; people can't just say they want their children to attend Cranston and give us

a check. The CAC&TC has been bringing in kids from other districts and they pay a tuition fee. The Charter School is now also doing the same kind of thing and he believes they actually have a higher number of non-district students than the CAC&TC. There are almost 90 kids at the Charter School that are not Cranston residents.

Dr. Lundsten: Kid's Count just came out in the past two days with their new report; I haven't read it yet. I was sent the RIPEC report today that has educational type demographics like that so we'll take a look at that and compare it and see if it lines up or not. We will inform the committee about that also.

Mrs. Culhane: Something I would like to see is this report and the Free and Reduced Lunch that we talked about last month included in the budget presentation and also maybe add as an addendum when we present the budget to the Mayor, I think it's really important to emphasize this to the entire City. I know the election is over but thismy kids are in a school that's a Free and Reduced school; it's a high poverty school; I see it in my neighborhood; I've had three friends have to move out of my neighborhood because they lost their homes. It really touches me and I really think that we need to push this forward. This is one of those things that a media person would do. When you look at the numbers of poverty and you look at the numbers of ELL students of minorities moving in there is a correlation; it's the elephant in the room and we can't deny it. I think we need to publicize that when we are doing our budget.

Dr. Lundsten: I think also we need to make sure that there's not a misconception here that because there's higher free and reduced lunch and higher ELL students that our Title Funding will increase. Not necessarily. It could decrease by as much as 8% this year. Our entire education funding could decrease on the federal level too.

Mrs. Ruggieri: I think it's important that we are addressing the changing needs of a City and I think that we need to make it clear, moving forward, that we need to address the changing needs of our City and that that has to be in focus in our budget and it has to be a focus on what we are looking at for future programming and all of these things tie in. In the past, our budget presentations have really focused on all of the things that we've had to cut, etc. We need to get away from that now and start focusing on our changing demographics and what it means to us as a district and what we're going to do to help function.

Dr. Lundsten: It would be very helpful to me if you have any suggestions like that; we already started the process and certainly during the Holidays, I'll start working on what the framework for this budget presentation will look like. If you have suggestions like that please send me e-mails and we'll work on incorporating that into the presentation.

Mr. Lombardi pointed out that those demographics are really

mirroring geographically. They are moving and if you don't believe that then....having gone through an election cycle now and going to a lot of houses and knocking on a lot of doors; Part of my senatorial area which encompasses Arlington and that area and Dyer Ave., Webster Ave. and all those streets in between; there's a lot...I've walked those streets; there's a lot of foreclosures there but you're now beginning to see them on the Western side of the City as well.

Adjourn Public Work Session to Public Meeting

Ms. Iannazzi reported that no votes were taken during Executive Session.

Executive Session Minutes Sealed – December 5, 2012

A motion was made by Mr. Lombardi to seal the minutes of the December 5th Executive Session, seconded by Mrs. Culhane and unanimously carried to seal these minutes.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before this committee, a motion was made by Mr. Lombardi and seconded by Mrs. Ruggieri to adjourn the Public Meeting. All were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Frank S. Lombardi
School Committee Clerk